Provincial Mental Health Advisory Council 1986-87 Annual Report

For the period July 1, 1986 to June 30, 1987

Alberta

Minister of
COMMUNITY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
402 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2B6 403/427-2331

May, 1988

Dr. David Carter
Speaker
Legislative Assembly of Alberta
325 Legislature Building
EDMONTON, Alberta
T5K 2B6

Sir:

I have the honour to present the Annual Report of the Provincial Mental Health Advisory Council for the year July 1, 1986 to June 30, 1987.

Respectively submitted,

Jim Dinning
Minister, Community
and Occupational Health

Alberta
MENTAL HEALTH
ADVISORY COUNCIL

Seventh Street Plaza, 10030 - 107 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5J 3E4

May, 1988

The Honorable James Dinning
Minister
Department of Community and Occupational Health

Sir:

I have the honour and privilege to present the Annual Report of the Provincial Mental Health Advisory Council for the year July 1, 1986 to June 30, 1987.

Respectfully submitted,

Albert Maiani, C.A., FCCHSE
Chairman
Provincial Mental Health
Advisory Council

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Provincial Mental Health Advisory Council

Mr. A.J. Maiani
Chairman
Alberta Hospital Association

Dr. C.G. Costello
Vice-Chairman
University of Calgary

Dr. J.E. Arboleda-Florez
Alberta Psychiatric Association

Dr. H.F.A. Azim
University of Alberta

Dr. L.E. Anderson
(replaced during the year by)
Ms. S.M. Bloxham
Canadian Mental Health Association

Ms. J.Z. Clave
(ex-officio)
Hospitals and Medical Care

Mr. G. J. Draper
The Law Society of Alberta

Dr. A.G. Blunden
(replaced during the year by)
Ms. I.M. Fletcher
General Public

Mrs. S. E. Forbes
General Public

Mr. R. D. Fowler
General Public

Mr. T.S. Kelsall
(replaced during the year by)
Dr. C.D. Ganam
Canadian Mental Health Association

Dr. A.E. Hohol
Psychologists Association of Alberta

Mr. A. Knowles
Alberta Association of Social Workers

Mrs. I.M. Myrah
Alberta Association of Registered Nurses
Mr. E.J. Neufeldt
Psychiatric Nurses Association of Alberta

Dr. J.R. Settle
College of Physicians and Surgeons

Mrs. J.E. Waddell
General Public

REGIONAL COUNCIL CHAIRMEN:

Mrs. M.J. Blanchard
Medicine Hat Regional Mental Health Council

Mrs. J. I. Impey
Peace River/Grande Prairie Regional Mental Health Council

Dr. L. R. McKenzie
Lethbridge Regional Mental Health Council

Mrs. M.M. Nelson
Edmonton Regional Mental Health Council

Father H.S. Rose
Red Deer Mental Health Council

Ms. A.A. Tanney
Calgary Regional Mental Health Council

About the Council

History and Mandate

History and Mandate

In the mid 1960s, Dr. W.R.N. Blair was commissioned by the Alberta Government to direct a study on mental health in the province. His mandate was to make recommendations for improving programs and facilities for the treatment, rehabilitation and prevention of mental illness.

His comprehensive study examined the organization and administration of mental health. The new structure and system he recommended included an advisory council to be autonomous from government.

As a result of Dr. Blair's study, the Mental Health Act was revised in 1972. The new Act created the Provincial Mental Health Advisory Council (PMHAC) and regional mental health councils.

The membership and activities of PMHAC are defined by the Mental Health Act (Chapter M-13 Revised Statutes of Alberta 1980) and the Mental Health Amendment Act 1981. Regulations have been enacted which establish the Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Calgary, Red Deer, Edmonton and Peace River/ Grande Prairie regional mental health councils and guide their activities.

The composition of PMHAC is clearly spelled out in the legislation. Of the 22 individuals who comprise the Council, six are regional council chairmen and not more than four represent the general public. The remainder are individuals nominated to represent specific agencies and organizations, as defined in the Act.

The role of PMHAC is to advise the Minister on matters to do with mental health. To carry out this mandate, it may inquire into and consider any matter pertaining to mental health, including the policies, programs, services, or administrative procedures of government which relate to mental health. The Council may also advise on planning, development, standards, co-ordination and evaluation of mental health services in Alberta.

A major component of PMHAC's mandate is the administration of an annual $750,000 grant from Alberta Community and Occupational Health. This grant is for the promotion and development of mental health research in the province.

Organization

Organization

At the outset of this year, there were four active standing committees of PMHAC:

Executive Committee
Research Committee
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Committee
Crisis Intervention Education Committee

Each committee of PMHAC has its own mandate and is assigned tasks that vary in magnitude. They report to PMHAC on a regular basis.

The **Executive Committee** does much of the long-term planning for PMHAC and also monitors the month-to-month progress of PMHAC activities. On several occasions the Committee met with the Minister on behalf of PMHAC to communicate its objectives and concerns.

The role of the **Research Committee** is to promote and develop research and research training in the province. To carry out this mandate, the Committee processes grant applications from the PMHAC research fund, makes recommendations for the funding of research proposals, and monitors the status of research funded.

The **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Committee** examines issues relating to this population. To help carry out this mandate, it has established a contact person who is knowledgeable and informed about local child and adolescent services and concerns in each of the mental health regions. The Committee has responded to the Fewster Report, examined the effects of privatization on children's mental health services and private adoptions, and reviewed the Young Offenders Act and the Professional Parents Program.

During the year, the **Crisis Intervention Education Committee** was dissolved, on the recommendation of the Committee itself. The number of applications for funding received by the Committee had fallen sharply in 1986. Committee members felt that their mandate was too broad and that they lacked the kind of clear identity that might come with a mandate focused on a specific crisis.

PMHAC has also established ad hoc committees which make recommendations on specific subjects. Examples of these are outlined in this report.

PMHAC representatives attended meetings of the Rural Health Association and the Suicide Prevention Provincial Advisory Committee and reported to PMHAC regularly about their activities.

The Year in Review

Uniform Mental Health Act

New Mental Health Act

Young Offenders Act

Privatization

PMHAC was involved in a wide range of projects during 1986/87. Several, such as the Uniform Mental Health Act, were carried over from the previous year, while others, including the Fewster Report, *Expanding the Circle*, were initiated during the year and will continue into the next.

Uniform Mental Health Act

In 1986, the Uniform Law Conference initiated a mental health law project to produce a model Uniform Mental Health Act for Canada. In April and again in September 1986, PMHAC was invited to comment on the first and second drafts of this Act. Their comments, as well as those of other interested parties in the province, were included in an Alberta position paper which was considered in a redrafting of the Act. In March 1987, PMHAC received a copy of the recommended version of the Uniform Mental Health Act.

New Mental Health Act - Bill 3

During March 1987 and again in June 1987, PMHAC presented submissions regarding their concerns and recommendations for changes to the proposed Mental Health Act.

The Young Offenders Act

Another project carried over from the previous year was an investigation of policies and procedures for the assessment and treatment of young offenders. In September 1986, Council passed a resolution that "an independent task force be established to investigate the adequacy of mental health services for young offenders in the Solicitor General's custody, and to provide an opinion on whether some or all of these services might be better delivered under the auspices of a different ministry. The task force is to be funded by, and report to, the Interdepartmental Committee on Mental Health and to PMHAC."

It was decided that the formation of the task force was not necessary because the Solicitor General's department informed Council about a new branch for dealing with young offenders which would improve on the existing methods of assessment and treatment.

Privatization

Throughout the year PMHAC and the regional councils have investigated how the quality of mental health services, and particularly the services available to children, would be affected if some were provided by private companies. In April 1987, after a number of months spent gathering information in each of their areas, the regional councils, in a joint effort, presented PMHAC with a summary of the important issues surrounding privatization.

Community Care

Mental Health Awareness

Expanding the Circle

Clinical Training

Community Care for the Chronically Psychosocially Disabled

In April 1986, the Mental Health Services Division of Alberta Community and Occupational Health distributed a paper on "Community Care for the Chronic Psychosocially Disabled". Council agreed that this was an important issue and it was decided that a workshop should be held to develop recommendations in this area.

An ad hoc workshop planning committee was struck in September 1986 and the workshop took place in Calgary on April 23-24, 1987. It was officially opened by the Honourable Jim Dinning and the keynote speaker was Dr. D. Wasylenki, Director of the Continuing Care Division, Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, Toronto.

Thirteen recommendations concerning care for the chronically psychosocially disabled evolved from the workshop planning sessions and were presented to the Minister for his review and consideration.

Mental Health Awareness

Public perception and awareness of mental health were examined by PMHAC and raised with the Minister in February 1987. He agreed that a feasibility study on the promotion of mental health awareness should be undertaken. PMHAC agreed to designate $35,000 to underwrite an initial study. The study would identify options for a campaign to minimize the stigma and discrimination of mental illness in adults and children and emphasize prevention of mental illness and promotion of mental health.

Expanding the Circle

The Minister requested PMHAC, in conjunction with the regional councils, to organize a public consultation process in regard to *Expanding the Circle*, a report on a community approach to children's mental health prepared by Gerry Fewster. After considerable planning, this process began with each regional council being given the responsibility for conducting up to five public forums in its geographic area. A total of 24 public forums were planned. In addition, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Committee, other PMHAC members, and representatives of allied organizations were invited to make submissions.

Clinical Training Program

PMHAC unanimously supported the development and institution of a clinical training program in psychology at one of the Alberta universities.

Mental Health Research

PMHAC Research Unit

Chronic Mental Illnesses

PMHAC Research Unit

During the year under review, many exciting research projects funded by the research committee were in progress throughout the province. Among them was the major project conducted in the first PMHAC Research Unit at the University of Alberta. This research, which received international attention as reports on its progress were published, was focused on depressive disorders which do not respond to the presently available anti-depressant drugs. Extensive investigations of the chemistry of the brain and the effects of drugs on that chemistry have resulted in the discovery of new methods of measurement. New pharmacological compounds have also been discovered that show promise as anti-depressant drugs that may work for this group of depressed patients.

In order to obtain a deeper understanding of how the chemistry of the brain is related to the experiences and behavior of people and the development of depression, researchers in the unit were also doing innovative research which compared the brain chemistry and psychological functioning of depressed patients and patients with two serious psychiatric disorders: Attention Deficit Disorder and Gilles de la Tourette Syndrome.

Projects being conducted by other researchers in the province included research on chronic mental illnesses, mental health problems of the elderly and mental health problems of children.

Chronic Mental Illnesses

At the Holy Cross Hospital in Calgary, research was done on the maladaptive ways in which people with chronic anxiety disorders, such as agoraphobia, think about themselves and about the environment which frightens them. The results of the research were expected to lead to the development of new therapy procedures for patients with anxiety disorders. At the Foothills Hospital in Calgary, researchers investigated how irregular breathing habits may cause panic in patients with panic disorder and methods of teaching such patients how to breathe normally were developed.

At the University of Alberta in Edmonton, one group of researchers investigated the factors associated with the decreased life expectancy of schizophrenics; another group investigated the muscle activity in the middle ear suspected of causing auditory hallucinations of schizophrenics. A third group searched for predictors of violence among pedophiles.

At the University of Calgary, one group of investigators searched for early signs of the development of Huntington's Disease, a serious neurological disorder the symptoms of which include progressive uncontrollable movements and progressive decline in intellectual functioning. Another group at this university developed new methods of classifying personality disorders such as anti-social personality disorder.

Problems of the Elderly

Problems of Children

Other Research Projects

At the University of Lethbridge, innovative work was done on how brain damage effects the ability of people to express their emotions and to perceive accurately the expression of emotions by others, capacities that are important in our relationships with people and the absence of which make rehabilitation of the brain-damaged patient difficult.

Mental Health Problems of the Elderly

On the basis of their extensive research into the different ways in which memory fails with normal aging, researchers at the University of Alberta tested the usefulness of sensitive tests of memory change in detecting early signs of Alzheimer's Disease. Other groups at this university investigated the same disease, one group searching for the neurological and psychological process underlying the disruptive symptom of wandering and another group testing the therapeutic potential of new drugs in the treatment of the disease. In the hope of providing leads to such new drugs, researchers at the University of Calgary investigated the ways in which chemical changes are involved in the degeneration of nerve cells that causes the disease.

Mental Health Problems of Children

At the University of Alberta, research was done by one group on how reading skills fail to develop in reading-disabled children. Another group at this university investigated the recovery of language skills in brain-injured children in order to develop optimal schedules of intervention which would minimize the impact of language disorders on subsequent school performances and social functioning.

A major project at the Alberta Children's Hospital involved the investigation of the way in which changes in diet affect the behavior of hyperactive children.

Other Research Projects

Three projects that do not fall into any of the above groupings were:

1) As part of an extensive investigation of the frequency of occurrence of psychiatric problems among Edmonton residents, researchers at the University of Alberta investigated the extent to which such problems occur within the same family;

2) At the University of Calgary, measuring instruments were developed to detect patients attending their family doctors who were currently depressed or at risk for the onset of depression;

3) Also at the University of Calgary, the psychological impact of multiple sclerosis upon patients and their families was investigated.

Readers wishing to obtain information on these projects and copies of publications related to them may obtain the names and addresses of the investigators from Dr. Ron Dyck, Executive Secretary of the Research Committee, 4th Floor, Seventh Street Plaza, 10030 107th St., Edmonton, Alberta T5J 3E4, or by telephoning 427-2810.

Regional Mental Health Councils

The six regional councils reviewed, considered and advised PMHAC on all the projects described in this report and, in addition, initiated their own tasks in response to local needs and priorities. It should be noted that each regional council submits its own annual report directly to the Minister of Community and Occupational Health and therefore, no detailed account of regional council activities is included in this report.